

RECENT TENNESSEE POLITICAL HISTORY  
INTERVIEWS WITH  
MRS. JOE HATCHER

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD  
TRANSCRIBER - BETTY WILLIAMS  
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE  
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEW WITH MRS. JOE HATCHER

DECEMBER 1, 1978

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

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MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY





MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY  
*Oral History Research Office*  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38152

September 5, 1980

TO: Eleanor Mc Kay  
FROM: Charles Crawford *Charles W. Crawford*

We are submitting herewith transcribed interviews in the Recent Tennessee Political History Project with Mr. and Mrs. Joe Hatcher of Nashville, Tennessee.

Mr. Hatcher died before the interview series could be completed and before I had secured a release form from him. I will request a form from Mrs. Joe Hatcher when I see her. In the meantime, however, I am sending these interviews to be placed in the Mississippi Valley Collection where they are to remain closed for use for a period of ten years without written approval from Mrs. Joe Hatcher or from me.



THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THIS PROJECT IS "THE HISTORY OF TENNESSEE POLITICS". THE DATE IS DECEMBER 1, 1978, AND THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MRS. JOE HATCHER IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. THIS CASSETTE TRANSCRIBED BY BETTY WILLIAMS AND ENTITLED "TENNESSEE'S ADOPTION OF THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT".  
INTERVIEW #1

DR. CRAWFORD: We are discussing Tennessee's ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment on suffrage rights for women.

MRS. HATCHER: And the vote that it took to get suffrage for women in Tennessee.

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe Tennessee was the crucial state.

MRS. HATCHER: It was the crucial state.

DR. CRAWFORD: That made the number requisite for ratification. And will you tell the story now, Mrs. Hatcher, of how that happened.

MRS. HATCHER: This one man had not yet voted, as I remember the legend.

MR. HATCHER: He had voted and hadn't voted for it, but it was weak.

MRS. HATCHER: Now you have to clarify that statement!



I've lost you.

MR. HATCHER: He'd been on the other side.

MRS. HATCHER: He'd been on the side against suffrage.

But anyway the night. . .

MR. HATCHER: They needed one more on the other side.

MRS. HATCHER: They needed one vote to ratify it. And the night before the vote was to come up in the Senate he had a dream and his mother appeared to him. And she said, "Son, vote for this. Vote for suffrage for women." And touched as he was by having his mother appear to him in this dream, he voted for it and his vote made the difference so that Tennessee was the deciding state which ratified suffrage for women.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a very touching thing that his mother appeared to him in a dream, Mrs.

Hatcher.

MRS. HATCHER: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: But do you know anything that Mrs. Gilford Dudley had done just before that.

MRS. HATCHER: Gilford Dudley. The legend is that the group of women who had struggled with great effort to get the vote for women, feeling that it was their right as property owners.

MR. HATCHER: Carrie Chapman Catt had been here and the whole national array of women for suffrage.



MRS. HATCHER. In fact, women were living breathing people  
and they said it is about time we got to  
vote. And they had gathered together the more hardy souls and had accumu-  
lated a fund which they used for the promotion of the passage of this bill--  
to no avail whatsoever--and at the end here it was the night before the final  
vote was to be cast. And Mrs. Dudley, who was chairman of this group of  
women who were fighting desperately to get the passage of the votes for  
women, asked, "I have some money left in the kitty, is there anything I  
could do with it?" And who was it that was supposed to have said to her,  
"Go and try such and such a man, he seems to be sort of a fence straddler?"

MR. HATCHER: The House Speaker.

MRS. HATCHER: The House Speaker told Mrs. Dudley. But she says anyway, "I have over two hundred dollars left in the kitty after we have done everything we can." And he suggested, "Try this man." And she took it up and offered it to him. And bless my soul if it doesn't give him a dream that night from his mother. Her sainted soul appeared to him in a dream saying, "Son, vote for this bill". And he did, and therefore Tennessee was the state which ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, so that women got to vote and they were no longer classified as lunatics and imbecills. I've always loved that classification and that is a bonafide description of our classification prior to the passage. We did not own property and in fact I'm not real sure that some of us own property in Tennessee today. I have been told by one judge that we don't. That our husbands can sell it or our fathers or our sons or our brothers



can sell property and we cannot stop it. It is a woman judge that said that. And I don't know. I don't think we would have any trouble. And I don't know whether that is true or not. There was a series of articles in the Tennessean on the subject: Whether it was yet legal for me to own property which I had inherited or had bought and which I could prevent my nearest male relatives from selling or taking over without my consent. I don't know.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's a fascinating Tennessee legend and I'm glad to get it on the record. I had heard a little about it.

MRS. HATCHER: Well, a Judge Thomas who specializes in wills and litigation about wills, but was a woman lawyer and was appointed as a judge and she told my eighty-six year old friend who has more sense than all of us put together still. She [the Judge] told her, "If your son decided to sell the property which you own, he can do so now." And you know she [Louella] said, "I just don't believe that." She [the Judge] said, "Well, you'll find that the law will support him." Now that I do not know. All I have is what she told me.

MR. HATCHER: I don't believe it.

MRS. HATCHER: I didn't believe it either, but I didn't believe that we were ever classified in 1920....

MR. HATCHER: I don't believe a husband can sell it without his wife signing the deed even.

MRS. HATCHER: Well, he can have you declared incompetent. And if you wouldn't have any trouble getting me declared incompetent! (Laughter) If you could do it, but in 1921 would you



have believed that a woman's property which she had inherited from her father could have been taken away and a spend-thrift husband had married her and he could take all of that property away from her. Would you have believed it in 1921? I was an adult in 1921.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, it was that way.

MRS. HATCHER: Yes, it was. So, I believe that remnants and little pockets of casualness have been left in the law so that if a conniving person worked on it they might could work it out.

DR. CRAWFORD: I am sure there would be plenty of early case law about it. Certainly that would give precedence, I don't know about recent cases or anything.

MRS. HATCHER: Judge Thomas told Louella that that is true, and she said you'd better believe me because you can end up mighty embarrassed if you don't believe me. And you protect it every way you can --your property for your daughter--because your son can get it away from her.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I'm glad to hear that story about the passage of the amendment. I'd read an article in the Tennessee Historical Quarterly, I believe about it, and it had something about the man changing his vote.

MR. HATCHER: Harry T. Burn.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, I remember the name now--Harry T. Burn.

MRS. HATCHER: I was so infatuated with Harry T. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: I believe he has a son or someone still living.

MR. HATCHER: He probably has. He was a very prosperous banker in his late days. He moved down from



(he was then at Sweetwater, I think) and later moved down to Rockwood--  
a Rockwood banker.

MRS. HATCHER: Think of what dreams can do!

MR. HATCHER: Came back to the legislature in the '53 Conven-  
tion and some of the conventions after that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember any case perhaps in changing  
the liquor laws that involved a somewhat com-  
parable change of vote, Mr. Hatcher?

MR. HATCHER: No, I don't. They were before my day.

There was some changes back under Hooper  
in the Crump switching around. One of the speakers elected by the West  
changed. I remember it referred to in that book--very much surprising.  
This man and two Republicans switched over and voted with the regulars.

DR. CRAWFORD: You don't remember any vote regarding liquor  
in the forties?

MR. HATCHER: No, not any close ones.













